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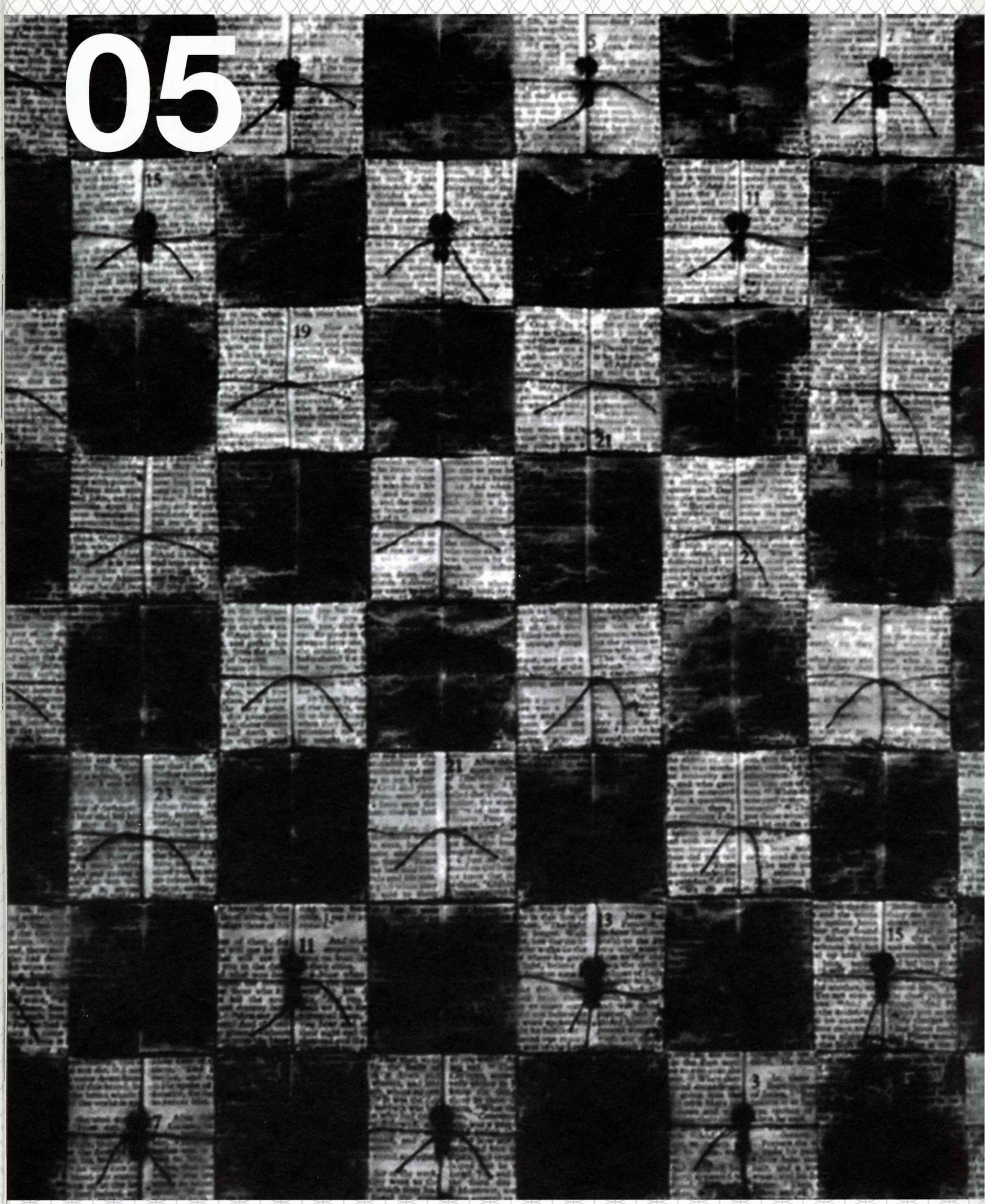

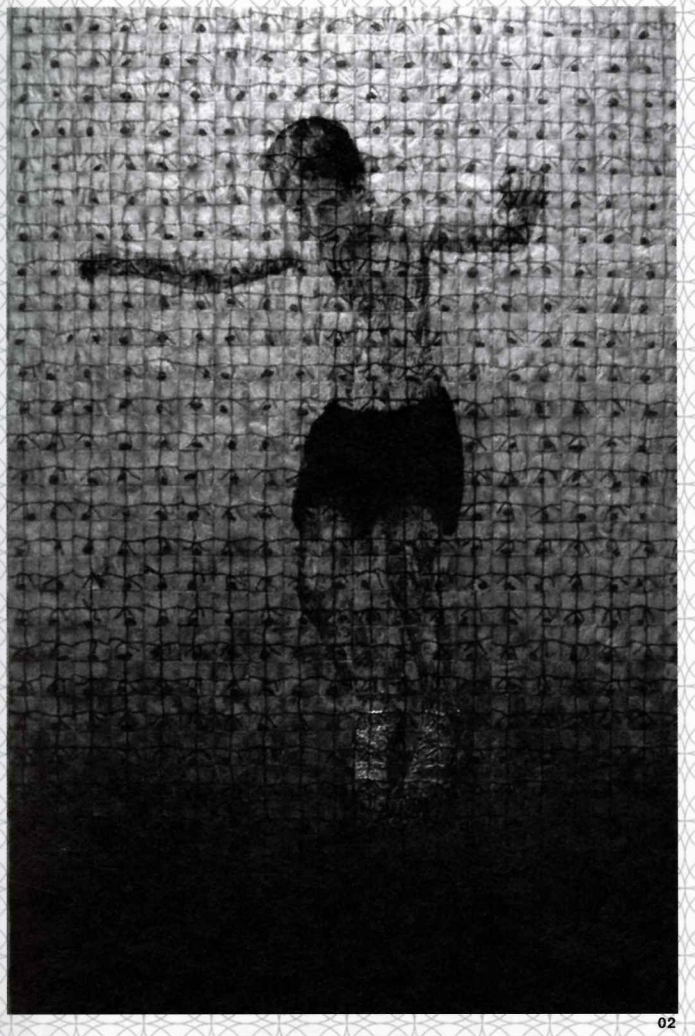

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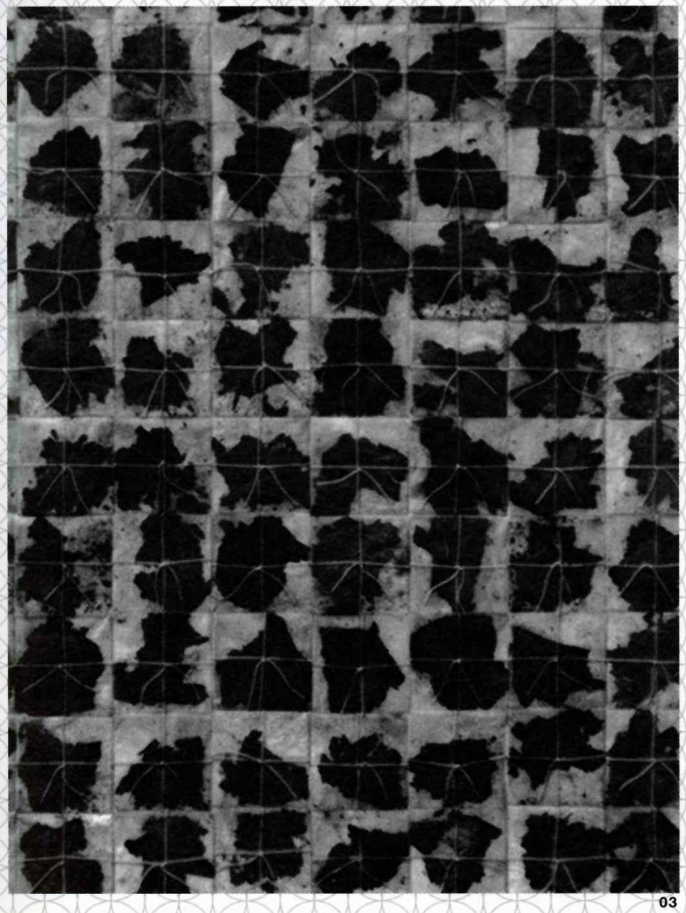


03

"I am trying to reconcile our religious traditions with the increased secularization of daily life..."

Name: Paul Roorda
Age: 39
Homebase: Kitchener, Ontario
Education: Part-time studies at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, 1997-1998; MA in Sociology, Northeastern University, Boston, 1992; B.Ed., University of Western Ontario, 1990; BA in Psychology, University of Waterloo, 1988

Artist Statement
I am interested in the meaning of ritual and religion in our society. I am trying to reconcile our religious traditions with the increased secularization of daily life. In my work, the materials are chosen to reflect the types of symbolic materials rituals are made of: wine, gold, tea, smoke, beeswax, handmade paper, flowers, soil, stones, string, wheat, etc. Processes are chosen in a similar way, often involving repetitive actions such as folding paper into packages, holding objects over fire, immersing objects in water, sealing with wax, tying string, or burying objects. The resulting artifacts allude to both contemporary and ancient traditions, but are something new. They reflect our ties to nature, religion, and history, and question our separation from them.

Presently, I am developing a series of self-portraits and portraits of my family as characters from the Bible. These portraits incorporate the ritual processes of my past artwork while reinterpreting the religious figures so often portrayed throughout the history of art.

In choosing this subject matter, I am re-evaluating the place of Christianity in our society. In my choice of process, I am exploring the rise of alternative rituals and meditative practices in the shift away from Christian traditions. And in my materials, I am considering the relationship of the natural world and spirituality.

You have been named the Great Canadian Art Doctor. What aspect of our art world would you save? What aspect would you perform emergency surgery on? And what aspect would you send to the morgue?
In my view, Canadian contemporary art would get a clean bill of health, with just a reminder to the public to feed our artists well (buy frequently) and give them plenty of exercise (exhibit often)! Art education, however, needs an emergency tracheotomy—it is trying to breathe, but can't. With the shift in focus and resources towards the academics, children are not becoming fully literate in the visual arts. Wouldn't it be great if our children could name a favourite Canadian artist?

Finally, let's just tag the toe and send to the morgue the notion that Canadian art must be defined by its tradition of landscape paintings. Yes, we live in a large and beautiful country, and yes, it has been the source of inspired paintings, but most of us are urban people. For many of us, the closest we get to this great land of ours is seeing the view through a car window, while travelling at 120 km/h. Wouldn't it be refreshing if the average citizen could name a favourite Canadian artist that *wasn't* from the Group of Seven?

Mantra: "Remember to breathe."

What's next?
In addition to continuing my work on large portraits, I am developing a related series of mixed media works on the subject of games. I am also beginning a new series of abstract urban landscapes in oil.

I will be having an exhibition at the Harbinger Gallery in Waterloo, Ontario, in February 2005.

To see more of my work visit my web site, www.paulroorda.com.

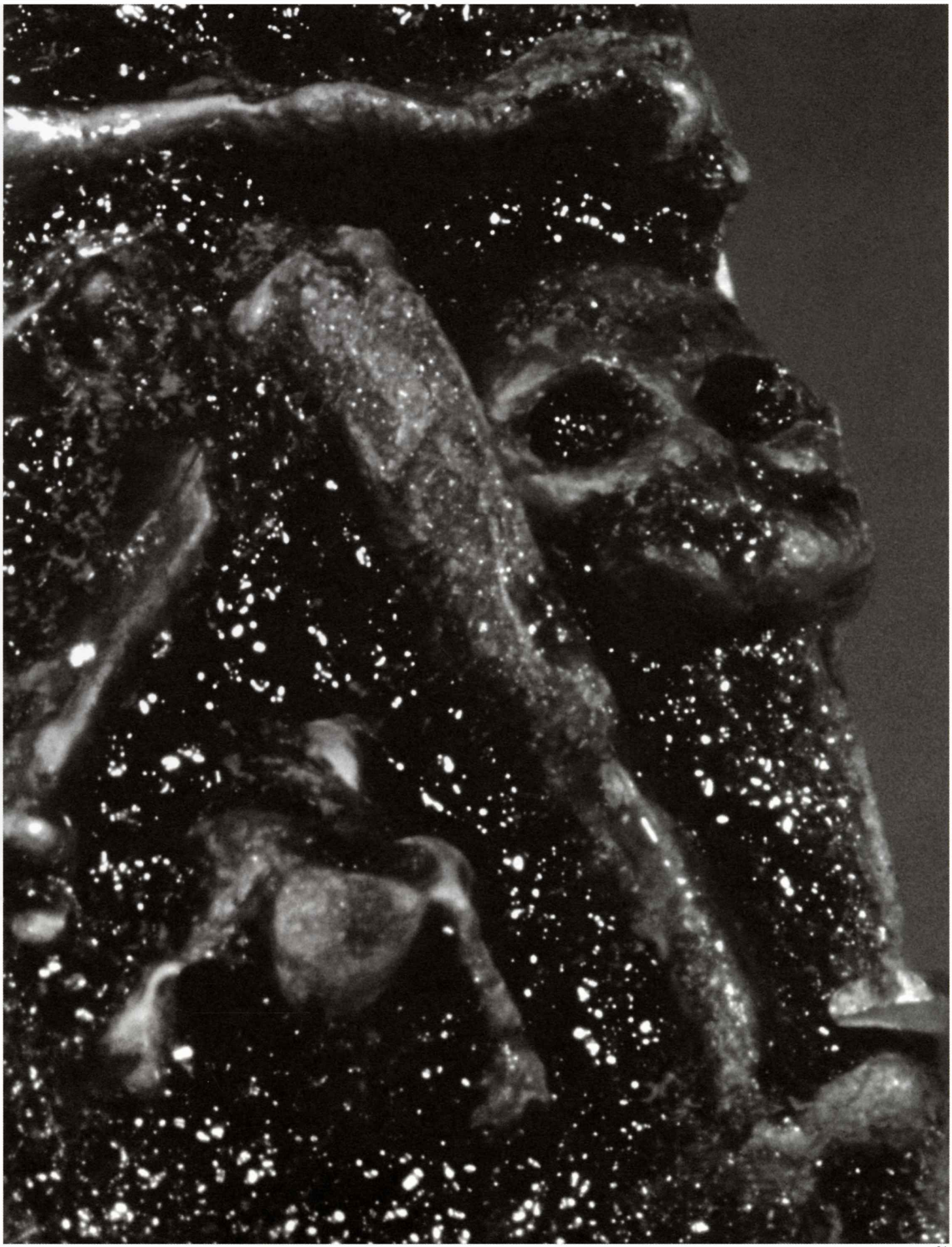
01
GAME 1 2004
MIXED MEDIA, 44 CM X 44 CM
02
ISAAC 2003
MIXED MEDIA, 183 CM X 122 CM
03
JOB 2003
MIXED MEDIA, 61 CM X 61 CM

01

Where does a body end and the essence of that body begin? Does the death and eventual fragmentation of a thing's physicality always mean the escape of the spirit? And if so, what is the footprint that is left to linger in these remnants? In keeping and displaying relics, can people also keep with them a part of the soul that belonged to that body?

I'm interested in creating reliquaries, objects to house remains; I'm collecting relics—bones, insects, and bits of hair—to live within those constructed spaces. I am captivated by the spiritual power that those remains embody, when housed and contemplated in such a way. In my work, bones float in a sea of gold surrounded by lavender, and are set with stones. Insect corpses lie frozen, trapped in beeswax, surrounded with pieces of gold, like saints of some imaginary insect kingdom. These objects tell stories that I don't want told specifically; they hint at tales of love and loss and the ways that people try to hold onto the essence of what was, as well as at the process of how, eventually, those stories are let go. It is in the abstraction of these narratives that their power lies. The defining of a thing robs it of its mystical strength, and so these works remain questions. They are meant to be held, worn, appropriated, and studied, but they are not meant to be answers in themselves. MIX

01
MASS GRAVE #1 2003
STERLING SILVER AND ENAMEL
75 MM X 25 MM X 10MM

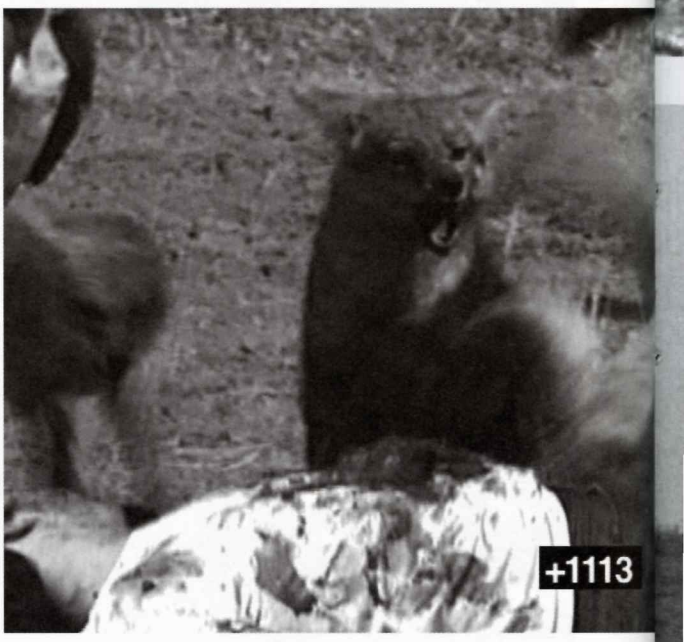


01

By Brenda Goldstein

+Immanent Death

+ THE VIDEO COLLECTIVE 640 480 PLAYS WITH A CURIOUS TENSION BETWEEN THE EPHEMERALITY OF THE MEDIUM OF VIDEO AND THE FUTILITY OF TRYING TO TRANSLATE IT TO A MORE PERMANENT ART FORM. THEIR LATEST INSTALLATION, *TRUE LOVE WILL FIND YOU IN THE END*, TAKES EVERYTHING ABOUT VIDEO THAT GIVES IT ITS VIDEONESS AND KILLS IT, BY FLATTENING AND STILLING THE ENDLESS FLOW OF SCAN LINES AND BITS OF INFORMATION, AND SEEMS A STRANGE PROJECT FOR VIDEO ARTISTS TO UNDERTAKE.



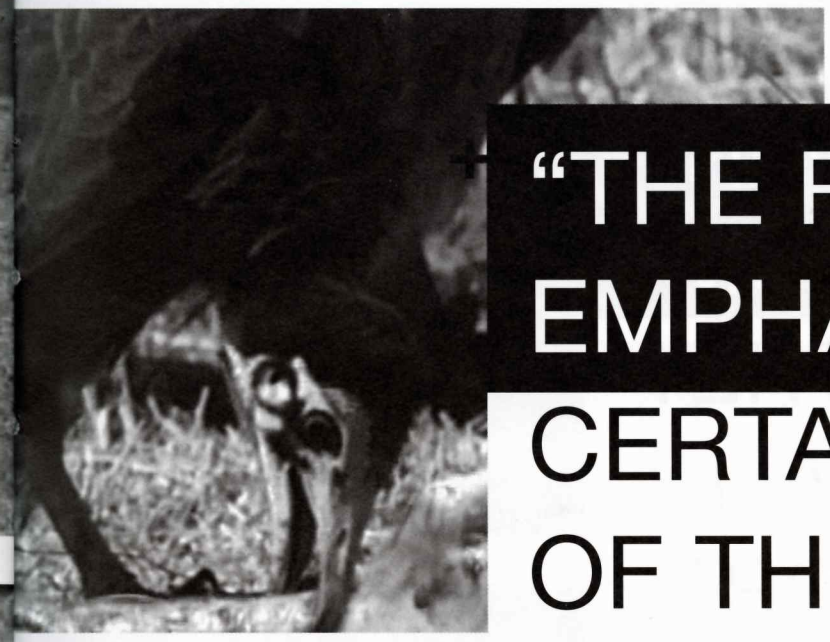
The exhibition, paired with Jeremy Blake's *Winchester Trilogy* and presented by the Art Gallery of York University at Toronto's Zsa Zsa Gallery, is the latest in 640 480's ongoing exploration of video-to-object translation. When completed, the collective will have turned a one-minute video into a series of 1,800 embroidery samplers that commemorate a death without burial rites. To achieve this, the video is fed frame by frame into embroidery software designed by the manufacturer Barudan. The program interprets the image and then outputs a stitch-file; read into the machine, it produces a stitched reproduction on fabric, and the video goes from the intangible to the material.

The seven-member collective (Jeremy Bailey, Patrick Borjal, Shanan Kurtz, Philip Lee, Jillian Locke, Gareth Long, and Edmond van der Bjil) began with attempts to expose a new audience to video by working with small LCD screens placed in restaurants and bars, to create a demand for video art.

"It ended up being a lot more ornamental than anything else. We would actually say, 'Let's make our videos extra accessible this time because of the crowd that we've got.' We had pretty much compromised the videos," says Long of the abandoned project.

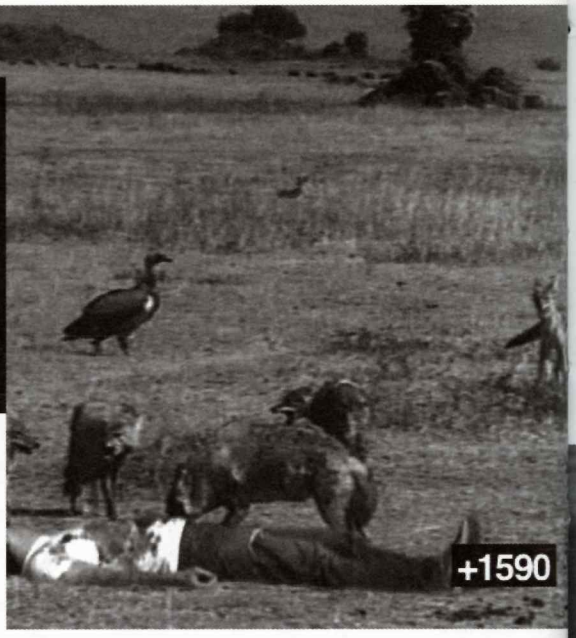
Frustration led to ways of examining video as an economic object and raised questions of how to create demand where none existed before and of how to create a value for video, which, for most viewers, exists fleetingly in exhibition. Since value in the economy of art is invested only in the material, the answer became to transform video into objects to which value could be ascribed.

In their *Reduced to Clear* exhibition (May 16 to 31, 2003, Sis Boom Bah, Toronto), 640 480 celebrated obsolescence and decay by using the process of degeneration to comment on video's inviability as an object of commerce and on its instability as a medium. Six artists produced videos that were dubbed back and forth in the gallery for the course of the exhibition. The process of dubbing was to lead to the ►



"THE RED THREAD EMPHASIZES CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE IMAGE; ITS BRIGHTNESS MAKES THE BLOOD GARISHLY CRIMSON AND MORE VIBRANT AND DETAILED THAN IT IS IN THE VIDEO."

+ "640 480 DECIDED TO CREATE AN EVENT WORTHY OF COMMEMORATION. THEY DID THIS BY DIGITALLY INSERTING THE GORE-COVERED "CORPSE" OF AN ACTUALLY ALIVE AND WELL GARETH LONG INTO A *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* SAVANNA SCENE"



dissolution of the video, and the public was offered the opportunity to purchase the artworks in order to save them ... but no one did.

"We were happy that all of the tapes were destroyed over the course of the exhibition, but they were dubbed less than a hundred times," says Bailey.

In her essay "Loving A Disappearing Image," Laura U. Marks describes the intentional use of decay in film and video as an analogy for memory and to refer to memory loss: "Many film- and videomakers intentionally work this process of dissolution into their productions, incorporating the halo-like colors of deteriorating nitrate, the blurring of multigenerational analog images, or the cruel lines of static on erased video."[1]

It's not just a decay process that refers to loss—there are other ways that visual coherence and plenitude of the image can be denied the viewer, says Marks. "Among these are the ways films and tapes break down, so that to watch a film or video is to witness its slow death. Another is the way significance relies not on the viewer's ability to identify signs but on a dispersion of the viewer's look across the surface of the image."[2]

Inherent in 640 480's production of video objects is the loss of information, the loss of the grammar of the narrative, and the loss of continuity from one frame to the next. Their *Video Centrefold* will be appearing in the next issue of Barcelona-based *Rojo* magazine. A video in magazine form, the work consists of stills divorced from a timeline, with overlaid lines of text filling in the gaps between the images. The text leaves the viewer to decide if the images are fact or fiction. The interlaced and blurred video images are framed so as to be off-centre and incomplete, referring to action that takes place outside of them. Both image and text are out of context and the fullness of meaning is lost. In *Video Sells Out* (May 16 to 31, 2003, Sis Boom Bah, Toronto), a flipbook was created from forty seconds of video footage. When reduced to eight frames a second instead of thirty, the number of resulting stills became a 350-page flipbook that was too big to work. "Even though [our projects] end up being another medium in the end," says Long, "[they] always ends up pointing back to video because [they're] always about how unrealistic it is to convert video into another medium, how inefficient and how futile it is to try to convert video into something else."

In the embroidery-work *True Love Will Find You in the End,* translating video is an act of rescuing the weakening signal from the ravages of time and the flowing image from the decay of memory. "If you look at video as a reaction to television, television is something that passes us by, which up until recently you didn't have the ability to pause or review," says Bailey. "It was something which rested in memory, and that was the only spot you could store it. Some people record television shows but typically you don't cherish television or video as a signal. It's a signal that passes through and is immediately excreted."

The concretizing of the video signal functions like memory, in that events are recorded in relief. What remains becomes emblematic, and expresses the loss of information, instead of acting as a representation of it. Embroidery has historically been used to memorialize events and give permanence to the fleeting. "When we were doing our research into embroidery as a medium, how it had been used in the past, [we found] samplers, which are usually passed down through families.... Embroidery was used to commemorate events: community events, local events, or familial events such as the birth of a child," says Long.

640 480 decided to create an event worthy of commemoration. They did this by digitally inserting the gore-covered "corpse" of an actually alive and well Gareth Long into a *National Geographic* savanna scene in which vultures and jackals feasted. This choice, they say, was informed more by the desire to work with red thread than it was by the desire to enter into a dialogue about cinematic decay and death. The red thread emphasizes certain aspects of the image; its brightness makes the blood garishly crimson and more vibrant and detailed than it is in the video. "I think it is part of the caricature of the translation, as well. The way a fable is a caricature of the real story, the embroidery stills are a caricature of the actual video, which is a caricature of reality," says Bailey of the carnage's accentuation. And, of course, red thread has traditionally been used in samplers called redwork, madder red being the first of the colourfast dyes of the early 1800s. Samplers were made to last for generations; now, so will this video.

The act of commemoration in a single image means the loss of the fullness of an event. Certain aspects become sharper when the event is reduced to a single fictional moment. If you are lucky enough to walk away with an embroidered frame, you only come away with an eighteen-hundredth of the original. Through the processes of translation and memory, so much is lost and so much is filtered out. MIX

1. Laura U. Marks, "Loving a Disappearing Image" in *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, 94.

2. Ibid., 91.